

SIGHT AND SOUND

WINTER 1942

VOL II NO 43

ARTICLES: REVOLT IN THE CLASSROOM
CHALLENGE TO FILM SOCIETIES
SOUTHERN RHODESIAN PLANS
COLOUR IN THE MUD

CONTRIBUTORS: Elspeth Grant
Forsyth Hardy
H. S. Magnay
Darrell Catling
Patrick Meredith

6^{D.}

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Sight and Sound

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Southern Rhodesian Plans

by

W. D. GALE

ONE of Southern Rhodesia's hopes is to form a Rhodesian Film Institute, but its formation has had to be postponed until hostilities cease and peace returns. It may nevertheless be of interest to know why we in Southern Rhodesia attach such importance to the formation of a Film Institute.

Where is it?

First of all it is necessary to appreciate the Colony's geographical, and therefore psychological, position. We are situated in the heart of South-Central Africa, land-locked on all sides, with the Union of South Africa to the south and African territories of less advanced development to the east, west and north. We have been colonised only 52 years, the European population numbers a mere 60,000 men, women and children; we live in the midst of a backward (but progressing) native people numbering 1,250,000 only two generations removed from complete savagery. Our geographical position means that we do not come into such ready contact with cultural influences as does a country with a seaboard, and our brief period of colonisation and the population factors mean that we are only now emerging from the pioneer stage, in which our energies have mainly been devoted to making a living and developing the country's material resources, as well as to maintaining our position in relation to the natives. All this means that hitherto the great majority of us have been too engrossed in other things to worry much about such a cultural influence as films, important as it is.

But when the war is over, with the defeat of tyranny and oppression, we shall be ready to continue our development as a well-balanced community. And in this development a Film Institute, we feel, will play a vital part.

This Colony is one of the partners in the great Empire Air Training Scheme. Thousands of airmen from British and other parts of the Commonwealth are with us. After they have settled down and had a chance to look around, most of them have been angry. Why, they have cried, why didn't we know about Southern Rhodesia before? Why didn't anyone tell us about this country, with its grand climate, its clean modern towns, its native life, its bush and hills and mountains, its wild animals, its general charm? Why, indeed! The House of Lords has been asking more or less the same question. Why are not the children of Britain taught more about the Empire, about its people, its resources, its ties with Britain? Why is it that the average citizen of Britain has so little interest, so little pride, in the Empire? Why do British airmen, when informed that they are being posted to Southern Rhodesia, imagine that they are being sent to the Near East or even to Asia, instead of to South-Central Africa?

British Ignorance

The answers to all these "whys" is easy. It is because little or no organised attempt has been made through any medium to tell the people of Britain anything about her sister partners across the seas. Yet history will judge that the British Empire is the

most remarkable international organisation that has ever existed, that the British race has conferred more benefit than any other on backward peoples throughout the world, that its ideals and ethics are absolutely essential to the civilised progress of men everywhere. These are things of which the British people should be proud, they are at least things they ought to realise. We have a job ahead of us after this war—to cement the ties of kinship and similar ideals not only in trade and common defence policies, but, most important of all, in knowledge. The imparting of that knowledge will take many forms—books, articles, lectures, school curricula, and especially, since it is the most effective, the film. But it is not enough that only a few partners should co-operate in the task; all must help, or our general picture will be incomplete. We must all have our Film Institutes.

This form of international education, of course, must not be confined to the British Commonwealth alone. The result of this war, we hope, will be a closer sense of affinity between nations wedded to the democratic ideal, collective security will be pillared by collective understanding. To achieve that, we must know more about each other. And the film will play its vital part. I envisage an international organisation (dare I suggest a natural growth of the British Film Institute?) which will encourage the production of films in the different countries throughout the world, especially the English-speaking countries, and their exchange.

International Exchanges

Let us consider this dream in terms of Southern Rhodesia. It will be part of the Rhodesian Film Institute's function to produce films of life in Southern Rhodesia. The subjects are endless—life on a tobacco farm, on a cattle ranch, in a smallworker's gold mine, in

a native village in the "bundu", on a mission station, in the towns—a day in the life of a Rhodesian school child, of a transport driver, of a B.S.A. policeman, of a labour recruiter—the work that Rhodesian scientists are doing to ensure the success of this unique experiment in colonisation, the permanent settlement of a European community in a sub-tropical zone, on the success of which the whole future of Southern Rhodesia depends. Films on these lines, properly produced, technically up to standard, forming a regular part of school programmes in Britain, Australia, the United States, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand and elsewhere, and shown in cinemas to the general public, would tell them more about this country, through the most attractive and easily assimilated medium, than any number of books or lectures or geography lessons. Films from other countries shown in Southern Rhodesia would overcome the barriers of distance, time and expense in broadening the mental background and experience of the average Rhodesian, and especially of the Rhodesian child.

International Understanding

With a reciprocal system of this sort operating in all the countries of the civilised world, through their Film Institutes and that international organisation I mentioned, there would result a clearer, more intimate international understanding, a truer knowledge of and sympathy with each other, which would make it exceedingly difficult for future dictators (if any) to plunge the world into the welter and misery of future wars.

Well, that is the international, the external, aspect of the work the Rhodesian Film Institute hopes to do. I have dwelt on it at some length because I regard it as the most important from the point of view of Rhodesia's contribution to the common good. But the Film Institute would

have work of equal importance to do inside the country. The greatest problem which Southern Rhodesia has to face is the problem of race relationships—the day-to-day relation between the European, with his thousand years of race development and cultural background, and the native, only a short remove from savagery, with his superstition, his primitive ways, his crude habits, his poor mental development. (I am speaking of the majority, since it's the majority that matters.) Is it possible for two such widely dissimilar races to live side by side without mutual hostility as citizens of a common country? It is too early yet to say, but at least that is what we aim at. An essential part of this process of developing a cordial relationship is knowledge of one another—of one another's ways of life, ways of thought, outlook and background. And that knowledge can best be imparted by the film.

Domestic Policy

So another part of the Film Institute's job would be to make films of native life for showing to the Europeans in the Colony (it is appalling how ignorant the average Rhodesian townsman is of the native), and similarly films of European life for showing to the native (it is appalling how little the average native knows of the European), and thus, by interpreting one to the other in a way which each will understand, encourage a mutual sympathy based on knowledge. If that were done the problem of future race relationship would cease to be so much of a problem.

Similar work needs to be done in the spheres of agriculture and public health, to select only these two at random. In agriculture, the Colony's greatest headache to-day is the conservation of her natural resources, soil and water. As in the Middle and South-West States of America, the

European with his axe and plough, and the native with his herds of cattle and goats in the Reserves, have brought erosion. The precious top-soil is being dissipated, the heritage of posterity squandered. Legislation has been adopted to check this, but legislation is not enough. There must be knowledge. The film would bring that knowledge to both European farmer and native pastoralist, vividly and realistically, to ensure their support of measures to conserve the soil. Similarly, in public health, the two greatest menaces are malaria and bilharzia. Here, too, films would illustrate the harm these two diseases do, why they are contracted, how they can be avoided. The result will be a healthier community, a greater chance of the colonisation experiment succeeding.

The Rhodesian Institute

So much for that. The value of the film as an educational medium in the schools has long been realised. Indeed, the need for some organisation to distribute films to schools led to the birth of the Film Institute idea, but, as I hope I have shown, it would be folly to restrict it to school distribution alone. The use of the film in the classroom will, however, form an important part of the Film Institute's work—and until it is possible to form the Institute this work is already being done with the limited number of films available.

Well, these are the lines on which we hope the Rhodesian Film Institute will work when it is formed "after the war". It will not, we hope, be a purely Government body, but receive financial support from the big corporations also. It will have a statutory basis, but it must be free from red tape and strangling regulation so that its growth will be natural and healthy and it can expand to serve the ever-growing needs of Southern Rhodesia in the most effective way.

From Pearl White to Pearl Harbour

By ELSPEETH GRANT

[*Film Critic of the "Daily Sketch"*]

ONE OF MY most charming and erudite colleagues, Mr. Alan Dent, who preceded me in this series, expressed the shy-making opinion that all film critics take themselves far too seriously because they are very young.

Mr. Dent, knowing me to be one of the youngest of critics (young, that is to say, in the profession), will feel I am proving his point if I here rush into print with a protest against the immorality of the movies. Never mind. I will not be put off by Mr. Dent's quiet chuckles. I *will* protest against the immorality of the movies.

Don't get me wrong. I don't care how much of Miss Betty Grable is exposed to the eager public eye. If Miss Greta Garbo wants to wear backless bathing suits—jolly good luck to her, say I, and may her shoulder-blades ever grow less. Of course, Miss Grable's verging-on-the-blowsy, buxom figure may not be my idea of the body beautiful, and I may prefer my Garbo garbed so there's nothing to draw my critical gaze from her exquisite bony hand; and her (at least it used to be) austere lovely face. But these are just matters of taste, not of morals.

Nothing in the movies' frankest presentation of the human form could disturb me. Everything in their falsification of the facts of human life does.

Evading discussion of every burning question, 99 per cent of the movie-makers concentrate on sending cinema audiences home with the glad, glib message that everything will come out

in the wash. The wash may be a blood-bath—but they don't talk about that.

"Let you not worry your little moronic head over which way the wind's blowing or which way the world's going," chorus the movie-men, soothingly. "Let you sit just there happily lapping up the pleasant pap we're so glad to hand you." And there we sit, for years and years.

And then one day when the deafest adder (the one that adds up the box-office returns) cannot but hear the winds of disaster blowing up and down the earth, and when the dumbest, most insensitive ox (I leave the identification here to you) *must* feel our world rocking and plunging perilously under his feet, what do the movie-men do?

They pep-up our pap for us. Heavens, how they pep it up! How they infuse it with patriotism, spice it with action and garnish it with all the flags of the United Nations! And what pap it still is!

If the movies wish to be taken seriously (and they become quite petulant about it if one refuses to take them so), must they not recognise their responsibilities? Must they not realise that it is iniquitous to continue interminably to dole out this coma-inducing pap to people whom they could so well provide with stimulating food for thought?

The movies claim to be the greatest propaganda medium yet invented—and I really believe they are. But what has been the general-propaganda trend

of the great mass of the movies since their beginning? It has been that the worst can never really happen to *you*—for you, of course, identify yourself with the hero or the heroine. The last minute rescue, the last minute intervention of the *deus ex machina*—these are the commonplaces of nearly every film.

The earliest thrilling serials—with the heroine snatched away in the nick of time from the circular saw and the oncoming train—instructed us that ladies are never cut in half or run over. That was entirely untrue. Ladies are. They are even blown up, these days. But constant movie-going had left us quite unprepared for this. Recollecting Pearl White—who could have visualised Pearl Harbour?

I think the movies have let us down. I think they have done far too little to

help us towards a comprehension of life. I think they should pension off the *deus ex machina* (he's a very old and overworked person)—and if there must be a happy ending let it not be false.

Grapes of Wrath, a film I much admired, had, to my mind an entirely true and happy ending—not the conventional clinch, rounding off a little dream life, but the spectacle of a human being not despairing in the face of human tragedy, the impression of a noble spirit still undaunted by a chaotic world, still hoping, still struggling, still believing.

And after this outburst, I shall go to take wine with Mr. Dent—and he will pat me on the head and say, "You will grow out of this earnestness one day, my child." And maybe I shall.

TESTING TIME

A Challenge to the Film Societies

By H. FORSYTH HARDY

THIS season—the fourth of the war—will be a testing time for those film societies still operating. The reasons are clear enough. Except from Russia, no new films are being imported from the Continent. The best of those which were in the country at the outbreak of war have by now been shown. Product shortage in the cinemas has meant the exhibition of a number of films with a limited appeal which would not have been shown in ordinary times and would have been available for film societies. Urgent war demands have put a brake on experimental work.

For these and other reasons film

societies will not find it easy to compose their programmes this season. This will be unfortunate, if it results in the closing down of more societies which, during the war, have given welcome proof of the vitality of the movement. It will be equally unfortunate if societies feel obliged to abandon their progressive standards and adopt the less purposeful policy of the commercial cinema. It will *not* be unfortunate if shortage of obvious programme material forces societies to a re-examination of their function and to a more resourceful execution of it.

Our Function

What is the function of the film society movement? It is to stimulate the progressive applications of the film through creating a better understanding of the potentialities of the medium and building up an appreciative audience for ambitious film work. By its nature the film is a mass art. Experimentation in theme and style is difficult when there is a weekly audience of millions to consider. Inevitably there is a comparatively low common denominator of entertainment in the ordinary cinemas. The film societies represent an organised and articulate audience prepared to pass judgment on ambitious and experimental work.

The film societies have no mean record in the judicious encouragement they have given to the forward-looking elements of the cinema. It was the film societies who gave wide circulation for the work of the Soviet directors at a time when that policy earned less approval in official quarters than it does now. When cinema exhibitors still thought of documentary as synonymous with box-office poison, the film societies were showing documentaries in every programme.

It was through the programmes of the film societies that the work of Grierson and Cavalcanti, Basil Wright and Paul Rotha, and other workers in realist film, first became widely known. It was the film societies which provided a first audience for Len Lye, Georg Pal, Oscar Fischinger. The American documentary producers, the scientific filmmakers, the experimentalists in sound, and music, and colour, Flaherty and Vigo, Pabst and Seastrom, Renoir and Ruttman—all owed something, in their day, to the enlightened encouragement they received from the film society movement.

The Avant-Garde

The film societies must continue to

provide this *avant-garde* audience. No worth-while piece of experiment must go without their support. Their programmes must not be closed to any film which will stimulate an intelligent understanding of the art of the film. As film standards are raised in the cinemas—as they most certainly have been during the past ten years—the film societies must themselves advance their standards.

As I have said, this presents difficulties at a time when film production is necessarily geared closely to urgent war demands. Film society resource is being tested. Programmes cannot be composed almost automatically, as they sometimes were, by booking a French feature and a couple of shorts.

It is fortunate that, at this difficult period, the National Film Library should have shown itself ready and eager to help the film societies. Cavalcanti's *Film and Reality* does at one stroke what some of the more enterprising societies have been trying in their fumbling and handicapped way to do: survey a whole field of film development in a single programme. In showing this film societies are fulfilling one aspect of their function; they are contributing to a clearer understanding of the development and scope of the film medium.

The National Film Library has now gone a step further. The collection of the London Film Society having been placed in its care, it has decided to make available dupe loan prints of those films which film societies would like to show. A select list has been made and this contains many films which hold a special and significant place in the history of the film. There are the early films of Joris Ivens, *Rain* and *The Bridge*. There is Germaine Dulac's astonishing surrealist fantasy, *The Sea-Shell and the Clergyman*, which no audience could see with indifference. There are Vigo's *L'Atalante* and *Zero de Conduite*. There are two revealing films from pre-Hitlerite

Germany, *Kuhle Wampe* and *Bulles de Savon*. I need not quote further from the list to show its potential value as a source of film society material. With these films available, looking backward to trade trends in film progress will be much easier.

Show Our Allies

Film societies must not only look backward, however. They made their reputation by being forward-looking. One of the jobs they can usefully carry out during the war is to compose programmes dealing with the life of our Allies. In addition to obvious French, Russian, and American material, there are Polish, Czech, Dutch, and Norwegian feature films available which could form the basis of national programmes. Some of these films are without sub-titles in English; but, as the Edinburgh Film Guild has shown, the arrangement of an explanatory commentary does not present an insuperable difficulty and is a further test of film society resource. The technique involves a translation of the film's dialogue, the preparation of a story commentary, and the arrangement of a microphone as preliminaries and, during the actual performance, the fading-out of the film's sound at rehearsed intervals and the fading in of the commentary. The process can be so effective that the audience assumes the commentary to be part of the film.

Short films for these national programmes present comparatively little difficulty. In addition, most of the Allied Governments represented in this country are arranging for the compilation of film records of the activities of their nationals and these would take a natural place in such specially composed programmes.

There are many possible themes for composed programmes. I need mention only a few by way of illustration.

Programmes on such technical aspects as the place of music and colour in the cinema; on the work of an actor (Laughton), a cameraman (Périnal), or a director (Clair); on the development of the story film; on comedy or satire on the screen; on citizenship or planning. These programmes, as I know from experience, involve considerable time and trouble in composition; and, when societies lack the resources of a National Film Library, they are often only a partial success; but by demonstrating coherently and constructively some aspect of film achievement, they repay the extra effort put into them.

The Scientific Film

There is one special branch of film work to which I suggest film societies might profitably pay more attention—the scientific film. Here as nowhere else during the war experimental work is being done. The films by their nature may sometimes have a very narrow appeal; but when it may seem inadvisable to show the most intricate films at the Society's regular meetings, they may still be shown on 16 mm. to smaller groups.

The steadily increasing volume of material available on 16 mm. makes it possible for societies to supplement their performances with specialised programmes on sub-standard apparatus. For example, *Film and Reality* might be effectively followed up with a programme on "Documentary Since the War". Or a programme of excerpts from the great Soviet silent films might be given. Time has not dulled the vitality of such films as *Potemkin* and *The End of St. Petersburg*.

Despite the difficulties which beset it, the film society movement need not despair of survival. Given courage, resource, and some hard work, it can continue to play its valuable part in film development.

A Course in Cinema

Described by a Youth Organiser

IN Britain before the war twenty million cinema seats were occupied each week. It is probable that countrymen sat in proportionately fewer of these than townsmen. The nearest market centre with town amenities may be far from the village, and access difficult. The skeleton transport services of war-time have added a further difficulty. But the desire is too strong to be denied, and countryfolk go to great trouble to satisfy it. Last autumn, for instance, men from a village near a big industrial town sometimes tramped seven miles into the town when left behind by the bus, rather than miss their Saturday cinema. And some of them tramped seven miles back.

The cinema is part of the passive urban culture that has spread to and through the countryside since the last war, wiping out the hitherto essential differences between town and country life. For the sake of both town and country I believe that the passive quality in this culture must be replaced by something creative. It is not possible or desirable to restore the traditional ways, but it is possible to foster an urban culture that is active. Only so can the best in our democratic tradition be given life in the new order. One hopeful sign has been the movement to educate and organise consumers. The appearance of film societies can be understood against this background without depreciation of their dignity. To conceive of them merely as artistic coteries is to miss the significance of cinema. The gibe that the cinema is an industry not an art, contains this much truth, that it is an industrialised art, and even more than illustrated posters is the poor man's picture gallery.

It is from this point of view that the education department of one of the largest county councils is arranging a trial course in film appreciation in a remote village. A film group is to meet in the village schoolroom, where by good fortune a 16 mm. sound projector is already installed, and a specially whitened blackboard serves as screen. Expenditure on films will not be high, as some are coming free from the Central Film Library, and others at low fees from the British Film Institute. Only one or two shorts are having to be hired at commercial rates. Thus it has been possible to admit people to the course without charging them more than the fees usual under the county scheme for further education. This consideration, but still more the universal fascination of the screen, has overcome the chill of the word "education" officially displayed in the advertisements, and enquiries have been made by people not normally given to adult education: a farmer's wife, for instance, living some miles from the village; some soldiers encamped even more miles away; and so on.

Two Sections

The course is divided into two sections, one dealing with the social influence of the film, the other with its artistic characteristics. The first can count upon the growing interest in social and political problems, and the fact that the cinema is now a major instrument in the shaping of public opinion. The second can count upon the widespread popular interest in technique, in means as distinct from ends, a popularity to be understood perhaps by the tendency for means to

be more concrete than ends. The second can also count upon the fact that to appreciate cinema as an art is to heighten its entertainment value, and the average man's first test of the cinema is that it should be good entertainment. This artistic aspect is being dealt with first in the hope that an established common interest in film art may later on serve as a bond of peace in the midst of controversy over propaganda.

The Importance of Movement

It was technical not social values that made the earliest appeal of the cinema, the wonder of seeing pictures that moved. Movement therefore is the jumping-off point of this village film group's terminal programme. The first lesson contains the film of early actualities collected and put together by the British Film Institute, followed by the first American Western of 1903, namely *The Great Train Robbery*, and concludes with an epic feature film, which combines extensive and violent movement with panoramic effects for which film *Nanook of the North* has been chosen.

Later in the course we shall show how the earliest fictionals used movement simply as the essential instrument of narrative. The naive camera merely recorded the comings and goings of the actors with much naturalistic tedium. By cutting or editing the film-script it was possible to remove the too-frequent glimpses of the obvious, and the rhythm of the narrative was given a heightened emotional intensity. We shall use the G.P.O. Unit's *Locomotives* to illustrate stills that have been cut into life.

The wild movement of westerns and epics can be found in slapstick comedy, which was thus also appropriate material for the movie camera. A series of early one-reelers is being used to show this development. Among them is Max Linder's *Would-be Juggler*, in which a drunken man tries to juggle

with everything in his path. Linder influenced Chaplin, and the course proceeds to treat of slapstick Charlie, through another composite film of the British Film Institute, *Chaplin's First Films*.

The impact of sound upon all types of fictional was immense. For a time western and epic disappeared and were replaced by stage play, but besides being integrated as speech in serious and comic drama, sound had another part to play. This was to provide symphonic accompaniment to drama and description. We shall use the documentary *Night-Mail* to illustrate a more primitive aspect of this function, especially where there occurs the artless recitative of strongly rhythmic verse as the train runs triumphantly out of the night to its destination. At once more subtle and elaborate is the music and the prose commentary of our other documentary example, *Song of Ceylon*.

Pictorial Composition

That pictures should both move and speak are obvious wonders, but they are not the only ones, and certainly not the only pleasures films afford. Films are photographs and photographs are pictures. The appreciation of pictures is enhanced by a study of composition. Opportunities to study this will be given by further documentaries containing more or less static pictures of buildings and scenery. But the essential contribution of cinema to pictorial art is the revelation of beauty in movement. Documentaries about shepherd life and water-power will give some examples of this dynamic beauty. Documentaries of industrial and urban life will we hope carry the group to a third level of appreciation. The romantic standards of conventional art limit pictorial beauty to natural objects, but the artist-engineer is now creating beauty in machine and factory and in the articles these produce.

Buildings, scenery, shepherds, water, machinery and towns are all realities of the physical world in the midst of which the camera is set. But the film maker has not been content to accept physical limitations. He has created his own scenery, his own properties and even his own characters. Excerpts from *Metropolis* and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* will show this. And if scenery and actors can be made to look "unreal", the "unreal" can be given the semblance of reality, and the early cartoons attempted this. They were jerky, but their creators accepted the jerkiness and made of it an artistic medium. Since then the technical progress in drawing has given an almost natural flow to the movements of cartoon characters. Something, though not all of this progress, we shall show, of course, in the British Film Institute's composite film, *Drawings that Walk and Talk*.

At the opposite pole from the fantasy of cartoons is the actuality of newsreels, the cinema's version of news reporting. The March of Time series may be regarded as leading articles, and some of the longer documentaries as social pamphlets. Not all documentaries are social pamphlets. Some are travellers' tales, which, however true, are simply essays in escapism. *Man of Aran* is an instance, though escapism of such dignity has its value. But the Russian *Turk-Sib*, the British *Drifters*, the American *Plow that Broke the Plains* speak to and for our times. The British Film Institute's composite film *Film and Reality* shows extracts from all these. It shows also how the documentary element has entered more and more into fictional films, and gives among other examples scenes from *The Life of Emile Zola* and *Kameradschaft*.

The Sociological Approach

With sociology thus introduced another set of films will be devoted to the

subject of publicity and the question of its assessment. Publicity is here used to mean the giving of information and the fostering of a constructive attitude in connection with social problems removed from the sphere of controversy. *The New Generation* is publicity of this kind. It is an account of Chesterfield's progressive educational system. In contrast the Bournville film *Workaday* also to be shown, is an example, if not of controversial matter at any rate of sectional, for indirectly it advertises a commercial interest. Also in contrast are political propaganda films. It can safely be anticipated that the film group will detect the bias in the episode to be shown from *The End of St. Petersburg*, a product of the Russian revolutionary spirit. They will probably already have seen another propaganda film, *The Men of the Lightship*, but in this case will most likely not have challenged its point of view. Its photography of the sea and of life at sea, its story of unpretentious heroism, is rightly moving; yet is it not fair to ask whether the German villains of the piece were not militarily justified in seeking to destroy "international" beacons that in the circumstances were benefiting mainly their enemies? When this picture was first shown, however, few in this country had accepted the logic of total war. That humanitarian backwardness having been overcome, it is doubtful if another film of the kind would go over in this country after the coventreating of Cologne. Whether discussions such as this will arise from the showing of these two films remains to be seen. These at any rate are the ideas behind the framing of the course.

Nothing is being attempted at this stage to examine the fundamental social values of feature films, the most important of all sociological studies of the cinema. This eleven weeks' course can do no more than serve as an introduction to a world of immense delight and urgent problems.

THE QUARTER'S FILMS

Considered by EVELYN RUSSELL

IN WHICH WE SERVE is the best war-film made so far. Mr. Coward directed and produced his film with the help of Antony Havelock, Allan and David Lean, wrote the music for it and just to establish complete precedence, played the leading rôle. True, finance and facilities were unrestricted—a state of affairs that any director must envy—but that does not necessarily mean a perfect film, or near perfect for that matter. But the craftsmanship alone in all branches of the technique of film making in this production would justify the cost. Add to that, superb acting, dialogue that is alive rather than words spoken by cardboard characters, and genius in direction, and the result is as near perfect as I have personally seen so far. The strength of the human appeal is its understatement. No screen heroics here. Walter and Shorty and Captain "D" are part of our lives. We meet them daily. Their womenfolk shop in our shops, and while we are waiting to be served we hear the latest news of their husbands, sons, brothers and cousins. We share their anxiety when there is no news—and thanks to Mr. Coward we know a little more of what they are suffering when there is no news.

The First of the Few is the story of a man of faith and infinite courage who foresaw the need to the country of "Spitfires", and gave his life to perfecting what, at the time, seemed a revolutionary type of machine. Leslie Howard's performance as R. J. Mitchell is most sensitive and moving and he has handled the whole production with tremendous sympathy and understanding. He was aided and abetted by a band of brilliant technicians, to say

nothing of pilots and other personnel of the Royal Air Force Fighter Command, and a more than competent cast.

Here again, finance and facilities were, I understand, unstinted. Can it be that at last somebody, somewhere, is sharing my belief that we *can* make films that matter in this country? It rather looks as if M.G.M. do. They have financed entirely *Thunder Rock*, and can be nothing but delighted with the result. It is an ambitious film to tackle, seeking as it does to recreate the dream world of an escapist without resorting to "vision" technique. The use of "slant" photography for the first shallow, untrue recreation of the dream characters is effective, and the Boulting Brothers have handled the film version of Robert Ardrey's play with a breadth of presentation that is quite impossible on the stage.

Some Disappointments

It is a pity that more advantage was not taken of the opportunity offered by a great theme, "La Libre Belgique" in the making of *Uncensored*. What a disappointing film, unworthy of the man who directed so brilliantly *Quiet Wedding*, and, years ago, *Underground*.

Perhaps the magic touch should not be expected twice running. If I remember rightly the other *Underground* so expertly made last year by Vincent Sherman has now been followed by *All Through the Night*, which in spite of Humphrey Bogart and Conrad Veidt is by no means outstanding.

Even Preston Sturgess, witty, amusing and deft as is *Palm Beach Story*, has not quite recaptured the spark of *The Lady Eve* or even the crackle of *Sullivan's Travels*.

There is, however, a spark, not for direction but for performance, in *Virginia Lake*, which judging from *The Glass Key* Alan Ladd can ignite. These two comparative newcomers are unusual. There is so much force in the understatement of their individual and particular emotions that together they are dynamic and one mentally waits for an explosion. That may be why the censor thought it worth while to overlook the horrific implications of the political corruption and gangster brutality on which the story is based.

As an antidote, if programme planning would allow, on the same bill should be *The Magnificent Dope*, with Henry Fonda in the name part. This film is perfect relaxation. Fonda almost convinced me that the only way to real success is to be lazy. Even Don Ameche, Lynn Bari and Edward Everett Horton caught the habit—and liked it. But Walter Lang was not loafing when he directed "The Magnificent Dope". No, sir!

Comedy

I laughed a good deal, too, at *The Lady from Lisbon*—not quite so heartily perhaps, but nevertheless Leslie S. Hiscott and British National Pictures have contributed a well-made light comedy.

Both this production and Marcel Hellman's *Talk About Jacqueline*—frothy as this is—are more elegantly made, better dressed, better groomed and more richly conceived than British light comedy films have previously been. "Jacqueline", in the person of Carla Lehman, caused enough talk to warrant her being watched closely. It was disappointing that "Secret Mission" in which she again co-starred with Hugh Williams, should have been no more than average good—except for its music. Mischa Spoliansky, who is responsible for it, has that very rare thing—a musical sense of humour.

Music

Music must be part of and not additional to films.

Disney knows that. In *Bambi* the delicate, sentimental, boisterous, sad or joyful emotions of his delightful animal kingdom are shared by puppet and musician. Without perhaps the initial surprise appeal created by *Snow White*, *Bambi* stands as all Disney's films do in a class alone, so defying the usual standard of criticism.

I wish I could say the same of *The Great Mr. Handel*. I had always imagined that Mr. Handel was un-English and fat to look at, that he could play the harpsichord, that those who played his trios knew how to hold their instruments, and that Mrs. Cibber was not both soprano and contralto. I imagined, too, that, cherry, mackerel and milk sellers did not try to emulate coloratura sopranis. Perhaps my imagination has led me astray. I did enjoy Handel's music and admired the very beautiful but sombre technicolour.

Mrs. Miniver became almost a cause célèbre and rightly too, in spite of its faults and frequent air of English unreality. It is a splendid tribute from our American Allies, and I doubt if we could return the compliment.

Russian Realism

Perhaps with slightly different presentation *Salute to John Citizen* would have caused a stir. Or was it too real? Was it too much part of the lives of most of us who live so much closer to the Buntungs than we do to the Minivers? Perhaps even the war and its attendant miseries are better endured through a touch of glamour. Or is it that we leave realism to the Russians? *The Bright Path* certainly leaves a trail in the memory and *My Universities* incredulous admiration; but each is more real than average production elsewhere. It is a bit of a shock, isn't it?

THE FILM IN EDUCATION

by H. S. MAGNAY, M.A.

Director of Education for Leicester

IT is heartening to read the three reports produced by the British Film Institute during the last two and a half years. The first, published in March, 1941, is the Report of an Educational Film Campaign conducted by the Institute in March to July, 1940; the second, the Report on a follow-up of this Campaign over the period May, 1941 to April, 1942, and the third, the Institute's Memorandum on the position of Optical Aids in post-war Education. The three reports, which are quite brief, are based on the experience of Education Authorities and of the Institute, refer to experiments which have been carried out in recent years, express a vigorous and critical attitude towards the present position and give a clear indication of the action which should be taken to ensure progressive development. The complete lack of complacency is refreshing.

Co-operation Between Authorities

There emerge from these three reports the need for an awakening on the part of the majority of Local Education Authorities to the place of the film in Education and to the consequent need for the co-operative regional development of sources of film supply and of schemes of training for teachers in the use of the film in schools. The value and the place of the film in Education has been proved by a variety of experiments by different Local Education Authorities over the last twelve years, and it is significant that those Authorities which have carried out the experiments have gone ahead in the provision of apparatus and facilities for classroom projection.

There is room for further experiment in the appropriate use of the film in the Junior School—most of the work done has been confined to post-primary schools—but there is no doubt that the film can "present new ideas to little children successfully, vividly and quickly" and this aid is of particular value to juniors whose appreciation is visual rather than auditory.

The difficulties of war-time, affecting the supply of projectors and the production of films has not prevented progress and the second Report notes that between the end of the 1940 Campaign and July, 1942, more Local Education Authorities are using apparatus, more apparatus is in use generally and the teachers are more proficient. But even with this encouraging report there is much to be done and the lines of development may be summarised as follows.

Some Lines of Development

The production of more films appropriate for school use following upon wider collaboration between teachers and producers, the adoption of a more generous attitude by Local Education Authorities in allowing payment by schools for the hire of films, the widespread provision of courses for teachers in the use of the projector and the part the film should play in the presentation of a great number of topics in the curriculum of primary and post-primary schools, the association of Local Education Authorities in the provision of Regional Film Libraries, the setting up of a Film Advisory Committee composed of teachers and administrators in each authority's area

and the development of a central national co-ordinating institute (clearly the function of the British Film Institute in collaboration with the Board of Education).

There appears to be need for vigorous action on the part of the Training Colleges and University Training Departments so that all teachers may have, as part of their course an introduction to the use of the film. There is also need for immediate action on the part of the Local Authorities to meet the increasing demand from forward-looking teachers for the provision of films and apparatus. Technical advice on projectors and educational films is readily offered by the British Film Institute, and the Corporate Membership fee of £5. 5s. per annum gives these facilities to Local Education Authorities.

Institute Publications

The *Monthly Film Bulletin* contains guidance on recently produced educational films as well as entertainment films, and the Institute has published several pamphlets which are of the highest value in their embodying the results of the latest practice and research. Special note should be made of the pamphlet "Using School Projectors". There is need for action on the part of the Board of Education to urge and encourage Local Authorities in the development of the use of the film. A scheme of additional grant aid (to add yet another item to the hotch-potch of differential grants calls for no break from tradition) and the encouragement of the Inspectorate to urge this development of the film in schools would have immediate effect.

In any plan for education after the war the use of the film must take a high place. In schemes for new schools the constructional details relating to light and ventilation and electric points should be drawn up with this, amongst other factors, in mind.

In any development of the educational use of the film the place it should take in the Youth Service must be considered. Here are young people who, as recent interviews have shown, attend the cinema with uncritical regularity.

Film Appreciation

There is great scope both in Schools and in Youth Organisations for a training in film appreciation. The literature on this subject is not widely known and a publication setting out concrete suggestions of what teachers and youth leaders could do, with a bibliography of standard books on the cinema and film periodicals would be of great value at the present moment. Further, there has been little or no experiment on films for members of Youth Organisations. Many of the young people would find the greatest interest in deciding what sort of films they wanted and in producing—with technical assistance—those films. Already there is a turning away from darts and ping-pong to more purposeful activity, and this activity of film production commends itself.

We owe a debt to the British Film Institute for these three stimulating Reports, and I am clear that they should be carefully studied by all educationists.

We regret to announce that owing to unforeseen circumstances we have received neither Mr. Herman G. Weinberg's regular feature "American Letter" nor two other articles commissioned from the United States of America.

We hope to receive a further contribution from Mr. Weinberg in time for inclusion in our next issue. We have asked for additional copies of the two other articles and we hope to be able to publish them also in our next issue.

COLOUR IN THE MUD

By Darrell Catling

THE ADVENT of a new colour movie in the weekly programme of trade offerings makes no news these days at all: colour has been with us long enough for it to have become commonplace. And that's just the trouble—only rarely do we have a colour film that isn't commonplace.

Occasionally a *Fantasia* or a *Blood and Sand*, looms out of the drab and murky mist—but the dull monotony of thoughtless, unexciting, unimaginative, colour films soon swells up and envelopes those isolated sparklers in a pool of routine boredom.

The Director to Blame

I have pondered long to find the reason for this disease. I think it can be traced to the director, for it would seem that unless he is fired with a lively zest for conceiving his whole subject in terms of colour, it will necessarily result in the recipe as before, but shot with a colour camera, or become a tuppenny dreadful overloaded with as much of the spectrum as every Tom, Dick and Harry has been able to cram into it.

We are therefore forced to draw the conclusion that the main run of directors are either uninterested in colour, or ill equipped to use it. We can only hope that there are, among those directors who have not as yet tried their hand at colour, some bright boys with ideas—otherwise, apart from Disney, the prospect is very bleak.

We must not forget, however, that we have still to see a colour picture from Preston Sturges, Garson Kanin, Frank Capra, and the old maestro Lubitsch. On the other hand, perhaps Orson Welles is the man to throw us out of gear. At this early stage it

doesn't matter what sort of a bombshell it is so long as it gets us out of the mire.

Unfortunately there are few technicians who realise that colour adds an enormous extra burden upon the back of every creative artist in the studio, except that of the cameraman. This is not to say that colour lighting is simple, for, as ever, really fine lighting is as seldom found in colour as in monochrome. But the everyday task of the cameraman, which requires him to separate the objects in the different planes of the field of view, is simplified when these objects vary in colour—or shades of colour—instead of being forced to vary in degrees of half tone, as in monochrome, where one plane is always merging with another unless carefully separated by lighting.

While there is no doubt that a realisation, by the director and his collaborators, of colour's added responsibilities, particularly when coupled with a positive determination on their part to construct the design of the treatment in colour terms, will bring its just reward—there is, nevertheless, much to be learned about colour in motion before we can expect to be sent into raptures by this newer medium. If our painters, working with static colour, are hard put to it to master their art and thrill us—then how much harder must it be for the artists of film to handle the more complex business of colour in motion.

Nor can the theatre be of much assistance in this problem since over fifty per cent of its "material" remains motionless, whereas every movement of the camera alters the relative position or size of the background, on the screen. And this is leaving unmentioned a host of other considerations.

Some High Spots

When prepared to accept outside influences Disney has performed some useful exploration—in fact he has even “got somewhere”; but when he persists along his own instinctive way he is erratic, and often merely pretty-pretty, from the colour point of view. But if his colours are seldom beautiful they are frequently adventurous, which is more than can be said for the work of most others. Of *Fantasia*, too much has already been said to add more here than to say that I revelled in its high spots enough to forgive it its weak ones.

Mamoulian, with *Blood and Sand*, kept his colours under control—I don’t mean necessarily he was restrained—and so avoided that loose progression of colour development that is our usual movie fare. I have never known before so many scenes come back to memory, the following day after viewing, as I experienced with *Blood and Sand*; the images sank deep into my mind, and still remain.

Here was colour pulling its weight, contributing to the dramatic build up, and achieving an interpretation, for once, impossible in black and white.

The first colour film to break away from that bugbear that still haunts us—a flat front lighting—was Boleslawski’s *The Garden of Allah*. In this, Hal Rosson employed the usual lighting combinations practised in monochrome photography (particularly using large areas of rich black) and thus blazed a trail that gave colour lighting the fillip it needed. Ernest Palmer (*Gone With the Wind* and *Blood and Sand*) has brought the craft of colour lighting almost up to that high standard reached by Gregg Toland in monochrome with *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Shorts Show the Way

Our own Jack Cardiff in the “World Window” shorts and, recently, in the

British Council’s colour series, has struck a high level of intelligent lighting that marks him out for big things in the near future. In fact it again looks as though shorts (both actuality and cartoons) will show the way, in experimental work, to big brother feature. It is a pity therefore so much of Len Lye’s work has led up a blind alley, yet this seemed inevitable from the beginning. And what of Georg Pal? He seems to have turned in his hand. I haven’t heard of the Fischingers lately either. Colour’s little *Avante Garde* appears to have made a strategic withdrawal.

However, when the real attack ultimately develops, I expect to see John Ford prominent with some searing, biting colour; if he has a quarter the colour sense of that which he possesses for monochrome he’ll be making colour tell half his story.

So far, in the feature field, apart from those films already mentioned, the standard has been low and uninviting. We have seen an occasional rocket among the many damp squibs, but the watcher on the hilltop has had to use a telescope, as it were, to discern anything of brightness.

A short while back *The Wizard of Oz* emitted some radiance that registered an impulse upon our sense of delight; the art direction (though little else) of *The Thief of Bagdad* was pleasing every once and again; but it took the Pink Elephants of *Dumbo* to send my senses soaring into the blue, and any colour film which can do that I’ll call a film—yes, sir!

I would like to take those Pink Elephants and the Electric Dance from *Hoppity* and put them straight into *Fantasia*—throwing the “Pastoral Symphony” and “Ave Maria” overboard. What a feast! What an eyeful!! What a life!!!

Then after *Dumbo* we were invited to look at *Reap the Wild Wind* from de Mille. Well, they handled some difficult model shots very nicely, and the

under water stuff was vintage de Mille and quite good, but the rest of the picture was tame, flat and boring.

A recent Disney short—*Lend a Paw*—shows him profiting from some of the colour schemes of *Fantasia*. But outside of shorts and feature cartoons there isn't a trend, or a symptom (unless it be Mamoulian) that holds

any hope for the near future.

We should be infantile to expect a "masterpiece", say, once a month—but unless there is an all round improvement the producer is going to find box office returns no better for colour than for monochrome, and in dropping colour he will retard its progress by years.

Revolt in the Classroom

By G. PATRICK MEREDITH

[*Lecturer in Visual Education, University College of the South West*]

IT is not usual to associate Education either with revolution or with industry. Nevertheless sudden and drastic changes have been thrust upon all of us and the educational world cannot escape except by pursuing the disastrous policy of isolation. Moreover, mechanism is actually invading the class-room. Must it bring in its wake evils like those of 19th century England from uncontrolled wholesale application of mechanical power to industry, or can education short-circuit the process?

It is a favourite trick of the lethargic to attribute the evils of the Industrial Revolution to mechanism as such, and further to decry mechanism as a force tending to standardise man and despiritualise him. Fortunately the facts of today point so glaringly to the opposite view that there is no need to go on putting these reactionaries right. To take a single example, the introduction of mechanical devices into the home has freed woman from her 12 to 14 hours a day of cooking, sweeping, water-carrying, and all the other drudgery which running a home entailed and brought in its train an entirely new conception of womanhood so that to-

day women can enter into professions and the services, they can fly aeroplanes, drive heavy lorries, control complicated machinery and, with all that, develop far more individual and interesting personalities than ever before.

Point No. 1: Mechanism is a creative force for freedom.

When we look round the world of industry, of transport, of communications, of housing, of medicine, on all sides we see science actively at work transforming the very basis of our lives and taking our civilisation from what may be called the Meso-technic Age of transition from steam power with all that it implies, to electric power with all that that implies, straight into a Neo-technic Age of cleanliness, health, abundance, and freedom for adventure and fulfilment. But among these spheres of revolutionary change there is one sphere which not only shows no signs of passing into the Neo-technic Age, but has barely passed from the Pre-technic Age into the Palaeotechnic Age, namely the sphere of education. True there have been changes. We give children milk, some

schools have new buildings, even laboratories and workshops and some have got so far as an occasional cinema show. Text-books have been brightened and the curriculum made wider. But in the vast majority of schools the basic learning process still consists in sitting at a desk and learning verbally a vast mass of material which cannot be understood without sight and touch; and this process is identical with the methods of a couple of centuries ago. It is as if we took the hand-loom weavers, placed them in rows in a factory, fed them according to up-to-date dietetics, gave them music while they worked, and unemployment insurance and all the paraphernalia of present day industry *and still let them go on working at their hand-looms.*

Point No. 2: *Education is still basically Pretechnic in spite of all the frills.*

What of the teacher? We have an elaborate system for skimming off a large percentage of the cream of talent emerging from our schools, pasteurising it for four years in the safe, tepid, antiseptic atmosphere of the University, or for two years in the even more antiseptic training college, and then bottling it up permanently in schools where none of its best possibilities are given the chance of realisation and where it mostly goes sour. These are hard words. They will be regarded as an exaggeration but they are meant. Teachers and children alike are frustrated in school because our schools have all the features of a Nazi state in miniature. The power of the head is, in effect, almost absolute (though fortunately, there are some good heads that do not abuse it); the structure is authoritarian throughout and elements corresponding to the Race Myth, the Gestapo, the Brown House and the Concentration Camp can easily be identified. Only the mitigating influence of the English genius for not pushing things to their logical con-

clusion prevents this system from being the completely evil thing which it theoretically could be. But it is bad enough. In particular the average teacher is robbed of all real initiative and condemned to frustration. He is tied to an intellectual routine which wastes 90 per cent of his intellect and kept in a state which alternates between frenzied irritation and apathetic cynicism by having to act in turn as instructor, nursemaid, watchdog, postman, door-keeper, referee, parson, adding machine, thrashing machine, and paragon of virtue. Again, the English genius surprisingly often finds a way through, and in schools up and down the country miracles of inspired exposition are to be found. But much of the cream goes sour.

Point No. 3: *Teachers must be granted the freedom of the Neo-technic Age.*

The talent locked away and unrealised in this system is unlimited. We have here a power supply which if once given the machinery in expressing itself, could produce in our intellectual landscape in a few years, changes of the magnitude which we associate with large scale electrification in our geographical and social landscape. Put the teacher with the genius for inspired exposition at the microphone so that his talent is available to thousands. Give the mechanical genius a gadget factory, give the lesson-planning genius and the photographic genius a film studio. Give the artistic genius an institute for producing educational charts and posters. Give the genius at handling children clinical facilities. There will always be plenty for the born "Jack-of-all-trades" but do not waste the talents of the specialists.

These ideas will be anathema to many of the teachers who have grown to love their chains and who may fear that their jobs are threatened by the educational mechanisms of the Neo-technic Age. The machine-wrecking mentality which showed itself when

mechanical power invaded industry, must inevitably show itself in education and must be anticipated. The fears of the early machine-wreckers were abundantly justified by the quite ruthless process of elimination to which they were subjected owing to the vastly more profitable power of the machines. In education this need not arise because the profit motive is or should be absent. Just as many teachers will be needed as before. But their functions will be different, some will be organisers, some film producers, some testers, some advisers, some broadcasters, some directors of research, some clinical psychologists, and so forth, each finding scope for his particular talents as in any modern, well-run factory and none condemned to fritter away his energy in nerve-racking mechanical and disciplinary futilities. This programme of liberation must be made explicit from the outset so as to win the teachers' support.

Point No. 4: *The co-operation of the teachers must be won by showing that the Neo-technic Age has a new life of fulfilment to offer to them.*

At present the schools take advice from the Board of Education but they accept compulsion from Examination Boards. The latter are vested interests whose stranglehold on progress must be broken. When that is done teachers will, for a while, feel lost, since the automatic frame-work of their curriculum will be gone. The irresponsibility with which school curricula are devised is staggering. Education is a social process and the world which society has made is presented to the child through the curriculum. If the child's outlook is to be rightly oriented, society is bound to take a hand in curriculum construction. The Neo-technic world is not a simple world to understand. It will require educational genius to embody the essential ele-

ments of the modern world in a workable curriculum.

Point No. 5: *In curriculum building, the sociologists, the scientists, the educational technicians (film and radio experts), designers of charts, the educational administrators, the teachers and the architects, must collaborate in constructing the Neo-technic curriculum.*

Yes, architects. For even the most modern schools are still designed for Pre-technic methods of instruction. Classrooms with rows of desks, even light and airy, are still classrooms with rows of desks. The Neo-technic school will be a combination of cinema, library, laboratory, workshop, museum, gymnasium, theatre, common-room, and private study. There is no space to elaborate these but a word must be said about the museum. Not a stuffy collection of junk with which the word has been associated in the past, but something much more like the social museums of Dr. Otto Neurath in pre-Fascist Vienna, wherein are presented vital sociological, geographical, historical, and other items in attractive coloured streamlined charts, with no irrelevancies. By an elaboration of this method whole panoramas of knowledge, only otherwise obtainable by reading hundreds of volumes, could be presented so as to give the child that background of culture with which to orient himself in the modern world.

Point No. 6: *Neo-technic schools must have functional architecture.*

This argument has been presented dogmatically without quotation or qualification. Twelve years' teaching experience in a variety of schools gives one convictions. Given space and leisure a great deal more might be said. At last it is being recognised that all other forms of progress are in vain if not rooted in educational progress. May this rough sketch provide hints for a blue-print.

Showmanship Please!

asks

E. S. TOMPKINS B.Sc., A.R.P.S.

I WRITE this as a film-goer dating back to the days of Lubin "rainies", shown in tents and makeshift halls, and who has seen the whole panorama of film progress from those days to the present near-perfection. I write because I have been surprised at some of the inept displays which I have witnessed in recent months of the use of the film in makeshift entertainment, propaganda shows, and fairly pretentious A.R.P. educational work. The fact that the film exists to be used for such purposes is a direct result of the development of the entertainment cinema, and is a debt owed to it. It is sad, therefore, that so little advantage is taken, in sub-standard shows, of the parallel developments which have taken place in the trade, in the art of presentation.

A Comparison

To convince oneself of the powerful benefit to be gained from good presentation, it is interesting to make a direct comparison of the effect produced by a given entertainment film, under the extreme conditions of showing as they exist in the commercial cinema. See the film first at its West End or other City presentation; with a perfect, new copy with all the reels matched in photographic quality with each other, shown in a luxurious theatre with faultless apparatus, with a first-class projectionist, giving personal and continuous control of the sound, with variations in volume and quality as demanded by a carefully prepared cue-book, and with all the change-overs taken so nearly on their practically invisible cues as to be imperceptible. See the same film again a few months later, at a fourth or fifth-rate

"flick". Sit in an uncomfortable seat, in a dingy hall, in some unfashionable district, and see the once beautiful copy, now cut and mutilated almost past recognition, the sound track, now full of strange noises, just switched on to an out-of-tune amplifier and left to look after itself; the projection similarly slipshod with poor lighting, dirty screen, and the change-overs (heralded by cue-marks scratched with pen-knife or screw-driver right across the screen), so bungled by the dilatory operator as to be yawning breaks in the continuity, proclaiming themselves to all beholders.

The difference between two such performances is extraordinary, and the comparison leaves the beholder gasping at the way in which a fine entertainment film can deteriorate in itself and in its presentation. The answer, of course, is largely one of the interdependence of cost and quality, but the film-goer, making the comparison, is left convinced that it is better to spend that little more for the sake of so large a gain in effect.

Sub-standard Shows

The same yardstick should be applied to the sub-standard show. Film libraries to-day take great care of their films; and programmes drawn from the reputable ones can always be counted upon to be in good condition. The organiser of a film occasion should arrange to show the films on a reliable projector, in good order, and to ensure that they are not damaged in any way in the process. Everything possible should be done to give the audience a reasonable measure of comfort, in seating, warmth and ventilation. While it

may not be feasible to equal the commercial cinema in this respect, nor indeed should the audience expect it, an effort should be made to ensure that there is as little as possible of the "sub-standard" in the presentation, even if the film used is of that type!

The show should not be a diffident, childish apeing of the commercial cinema theatre, but should be a confident miniature replica of as much as may be of what is best in it, with the addition of any features, completely beyond the scope of the entertainment cinema, which may be made practicable by reason of the special character of the audience.

It is so often assumed, on these film evenings, or similar occasions, that because the material to be viewed is a film, and is sub-titled or sound-tracked, it is therefore complete in itself, needing no introduction or personal assistance, but only to be thrown on to the screen and fed to the loud-speakers in order to be an assured success.

Rehearsal

In actual fact the film, as it arrives in its case, is not completely cut-and-dried, but is capable of giving a generous response to any form of sympathetic treatment given to it by the projectionist. Volume and tone or quality controls should be used to the full, and every effort should be made to get the greatest possible effect out of every film shown. If a preliminary try-out is possible it gives the operator a few broad ideas to work upon with an otherwise unknown film; while if one operator accompanies film on its travels he has a chance to do full justice to it. This may be done either by making a full cue-sheet of all the variations in tone or volume, together with suitable incidental music to bridge gaps between reels when a single projector is used, or alternatively of quickly picking up such cues by heart

so that they may be put over with a complete absence of visible effort even when working surrounded by the audience.

Short films should not be strung together on large reels and then shown breathlessly without even the smallest break between them. There is no need to go to the other extreme and to try to imitate the super-cinema, with its artificially worked-up "suspense" before the main film, contrived by means of musical and lighting effects. It is, however, possible to make each show personally directed towards the particular audience concerned—a condition which is never realised in the commercial cinema, where films are perforce designed for a highest common factor among the vast everyday audience in the cinema. This does not mean a long, verbose, speech by the chairman, killing the interest of the display before it begins, but it is true that a few words by chairman, compère, or even from a knowledgeable projectionist, can serve to tie up each film with its meaning, purpose or message as it applies to the particular audience to which it is being shown. Only a few short sentences are needed, but they are worth a lot of care in the preparation, as they can be most effective in increasing the results of the show.

Local Colour

It is impossible to give general examples, as the range of subjects covered by sub-standard displays is so varied, but the following specific ideas may be taken as illustrating the line to be followed. In showing a film of fire-bomb fighting, the compère may suggest beforehand typical houses or buildings in the village or district where conditions might be similar to those shown in the film, or he may link the film's teaching with actual incidents that have taken place in the neighbourhood and are known by the

audience. Similarly, in showing a film of topographical or geological interest the compère similarly may identify local land formations with those which are to be seen in the film.

This method of treatment applies even to entertainment films used to leaven the programme, and the interest of the audience can usually be heightened by mentioning the actual date of the production to be shown, and the fact that such films are usually a year or two old can thereby be made an advantage rather than the reverse, in that the change in fashions will be followed with interest by all the ladies in the audience. Attention should also be

drawn in the brief opening remarks to the performances in the film to be witnessed of any players who have since appeared in rôles which have attracted particular attention.

The sub-standard show has a field of usefulness which is very wide and its scope is constantly being increased. Those of us who use the film for such purposes should always bear in mind the power of showmanship to make a display really telling, and we should always do our best to avoid the sub-standard stamp and to make our shows something to be remembered by their finish and their effect.

Geography Film Policy

UNDER Mr. T. C. Warrington, President of the Geographical Association, the Geographical Association Summer School was held at Durham from August 6th till the 20th. All the members except one were secondary school teachers. Among other things they discussed at some length the article in the Spring number of *SIGHT AND SOUND* on the supply of films for regional geography in post-primary schools.

The conclusions there reached were unanimously approved.

As this is an important fact it may be well to re-state them as the opinion not merely of the writer but of a body of experienced teachers:—

- (a) "There is a sufficient supply of background films for the present.
- (b) It is pretty obvious that one of the chief causes which is holding up the growth of the use of films in geography teaching is just the lack of a supply of classroom films which teachers can really use in teaching.
- (c) Probably no two geography teachers would agree on every film in a short list, but if a collection of 100

short films to cover the continents were got together it would be extensively used.

- (d) As it is practically impossible to go all over the world to take shots for these 100 films that geography teachers would use, it would seem necessary to provide films in some other way.
- (e) A good deal of useful material is in existence but, as it stands, not in a form suitable for use in school.
- (f) A beginning might be made in getting together an adequate small collection of teaching films by a re-editing of this material in a form that is useful in school."

While there was entire agreement that there was not a sufficient number of teaching films it was also agreed that the number of teaching films need not be very large to give an adequate choice. Such teaching films must be short, say round about five minutes; some might be longer but more might be less.

There was also agreement that the short supply of suitable teaching films

was a greater hindrance to the use of films than the difficulty of obtaining and using a projector.

These teachers emphasised the fact that they would much rather have films that could be bought than those that could be borrowed. A small collection of films in the school which could be used whenever required would be very much more useful than any number of films which must be borrowed with all the uncertainty of having the film at hand when required.

As schools have only a small amount of cash to spend it is obvious that it is better to have a large number of short films than a smaller number of long ones.

It was assumed in the discussion that the films would be silent so that the teacher should be able to use them in any way that he chose.

On the above Mr. Fairgrieve, the author of the article referred to, writes as follows:—

I am, of course, gratified to find that my ideas find such whole-hearted approval from teachers; what the teachers at the Durham school have put on record is only what others have said and written to me privately. Probably the most important fact in the above note is that it is evident that teachers are now beginning to desire to buy films for small film collections in each school, to be used when and how the teacher pleases. The importance of this fact is two-fold.

(1) It is quite impossible to learn to teach with films if one obtains a film from a library and immediately shows it to a class, or even if one runs it through once before it is shown. The best type of film to be shown, in this way is one which is entirely self-explanatory, but this kind of film gives no help at all towards making an advance in developing methods of teaching with films and so far very little advance has in fact been made. I know

this very well for I have, myself, learned how to teach with films by procuring a few films and experimenting with each of them to find the ways in which it is best used. Teachers must own films in order to learn how to teach with films. Incidentally they will also learn how to care for films.

(2) One of the difficulties up to the present has been that even if teachers have desired short films neither the libraries nor the schools have found the borrowing of such films to be economical; the cost and trouble of supply and carriage have been too great. If schools can buy short films for their own use that difficulty disappears. Producers may then, as do the publishers of school books, look to making their profits from large sales of a few films rather than from the infrequent lendings of a great number of different films.

Two intertwined Gordian knots would in fact be cut if the schools could buy and use short films.

Obituary

We regret to record the sudden death of Frank Bennett after an operation. Still a young man one of Bennett's many interests was the study of the silent cinema. He was also passionately interested in music of which he had a wide knowledge. The result of this combination was an ability to devise suitable musical accompaniments which doubled and trebled the pleasure of seeing the film.

Bennett was always ready to place his knowledge at the disposal of fellow enthusiasts. He worked without the least thought of reward or acknowledgement. Save to a few—and especially those of us at the British Film Institute—his name was known only within a comparatively small circle, but we who have benefited from his help know how much has been lost by his passing.

E. H. L.

News from the Societies

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

The Governing Body has agreed to a proposal of the Education Panel that a special sub-committee with wide terms of reference should be set up to study and report on the uses of the film strip in education.

The Governors have also approved the publication of two new lists of geography teaching films one classified under Countries and the other under Subjects. They have also approved and had printed the report on the Carnegie Campaign, comments upon which are to be found on another page. Finally they have approved the publication of a short pamphlet dealing with the elements of Film Appreciation. This pamphlet has been prepared in response to requests from leaders of youth organisations and kindred bodies. In this connection it is interesting to note that the Stoke-on-Trent Education Authority held a two-day course for the teachers in its film group and took the subject of Film Appreciation. The lectures were given by Mr. Ernest Lindgren, the curator of the National Film Library.

The Governors have agreed in principle to organise a three-day conference next year, taking as the general topic "The Film in National Life". It is hoped that it will be held in one of the provincial universities.

The Hon. Eleanor Plumer has been re-nominated to the Governing Body by the Home Secretary, Mr. F. W. Baker by the Kinematograph Renters Society, and Mr. A. C. Cameron by the British Institute of Adult Education.

NATIONAL FILM LIBRARY

The most important item of news is that the London Film Society Collection has been received. As a result of a ballot it has been decided to make copies available of the following:—

Papageno. (1 reel, 1935.) Lotte Reiniger silhouette cartoon. The story and music are based on Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.

Mor Vran. (3 reels, 1941.) Jean Epstein documentary. The film recreates the grim atmosphere of those parts of the Breton archipelago which are completely isolated from the mainland in heavy weather.

The Hague. (2 reels, 1936.) Otto Van Neijenhoff travelogue. The ordinary incidents of the tourist film are ingeniously manipulated to make up a story, whose happy ending culminates in the city's coat of arms.

L'Idée. (3 reels.) Trick film made by the Czech, Berthold Bartosch, in France during the years 1930-1934, with music by Arthur Honneger. Two dimensional figures, varying from white to black through all shades of grey, against backgrounds arranged at different levels to give depth to the scenes, attempt to portray the birth of "the idea".

Rain. (1 reel, 1929.) Joris Ivens' documentary of a rain-storm.

Hungarian Dance, No. 6 in D Minor by Brahms. (1 reel, 1931.) Abstract. Oscar Fischinger.

Zero de Conduite. (5 reels, 1933.) Director, John Vigo. The film was made under surrealist influence and is a comedy of school life which attempts to show both masters and children as they are seen through the eyes of the children themselves.

Ramuntcho. (9 reels, 1938.) Director, René Barbens. Romantic drama. An example of the brief renaissance of the French cinema in the years 1935 to 1940.

SCOTTISH FILM COUNCIL

The publication of the Report of the Scottish Film Council on the Scottish Central Film Library in September marked another important stage in the development of the educational and cultural film movement in Scotland. The report gives details of the three years experiment and makes suggestions for future developments. 678 Scottish schools, 635 adult education bodies, and 100 units of H.M. Forces made regular use of the Library, which distributed over 30,000 reels of film in the year ending June, 1942. Copies of the report, price 1s., may be obtained from the Secretary, Scottish Film Council, 2 Newton Place, Glasgow, C.3.

Most of the branches of the Scottish Educational Film Association have resumed their activities for the season. At the last meeting of the General Assembly the Church of Scotland set up a Films Committee which has already got down to work.

FILM COUNCIL OF THE SOUTH-WEST

At the annual general meeting on September 18th the year's work was surveyed. Many film shows had been given. Teachers' courses, film demonstrations and shows for students had been arranged. Under the new Lectureship in Visual Education a survey of visual resources was being carried on.

Grants for the purchase of new films had been secured. The Film Council had established satisfactory relations with the Devon and Exeter Film Society and decided to collaborate in organising a winter programme of substandard films. The problem of inducing teachers to make more use of the area library at Dartington is still to be solved and was fully discussed.

The circulation of the Library's educational films in this region has been disappointing, though the admirable productions of the Petroleum Films Bureau have been fairly popular.

The Ministry of Information Regional Film Library at Dartington, has completed an extremely successful year's working. There is a considerable unsatisfied demand for silent films, and it is felt, judging by the paucity of their list, that the Ministry somewhat under-rates this.

MERSEYSIDE FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY

This year we are trying a new venture of arranging a film show in town on Tuesday evening, October 20th, despite the black-out. We hope to show the French film *Le Roman D'un Tricheur*.

On Saturday afternoon, January 16th, 1943, we hope to have a special show, and if possible to arrange for a film star, or other film personality, to address our members. Both these proposed performances will be at the Philharmonic Hall, and any further arrangements will be left until we see what support is obtained at the October show.

MANCHESTER AND DISTRICT FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY

The Society has lost the services of the Hon. Secretary, Mr. John Maddison—appointed to the Ministry of Information, N.E. Region, Leeds, and of the Chairman, Mr. Thomas Hodge—transferred to Chicago. Nevertheless the joint film shows with the Manchester and Salford Film Society will continue. A public French-Czech show in aid of appropriate charities took place on October 4th, when the programme consisted of *Judas Was a Woman* (*La Bête Humaine*) and Czechoslovakian shorts.

The new Secretary is Mr. J. H. Black, "The Limes", 148 Wilmslow Road, Didsbury, Manchester, 20.

The new Treasurer, Mr. E. R. Friedleander, 6 College Drive, Whalley Range, Manchester, 16.

LONDON FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY

The sixth annual general meeting was held on September 14th. The Annual Report was adopted and the Executive Com-

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mittee was unanimously re-elected. After the meeting, some of the National Film Library treasures were shown to members in the Institute's theatre.

The new season, which will consist of eight shows, began on September 20th with *Les Trois de St. Cyr* and some colour shorts. The first four shows were again held at the Assembly Hall of the Royal Empire Society.

As last season a number of applications for membership had to be turned down owing to lack of accommodation, it has been decided to run two performances of each programme, one at 2.30 and one at 5 p.m.

BELFAST FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY

The Belfast Film Institute Society looks back on a season of eight repertory shows ranging from *La Marseillaise* and *Chapayev* to *Le Roe S'Amuse* and *Musical Story*. *La Femme du Boulanger* was the most popular and the double bill of *Zero de Conduite* and the Marx Brothers' *Monkey Business* the most unusual programme shown for a long time in Belfast. Supporting short films included revivals of *Cover to Cover*, Lye's *Colour Box*, Lotte Reiniger's *Cinderella*, *Zoo Babies*, and several of the new Soviet shorts not seen before in Northern Ireland.

Circumstances during the past year have allowed very little activity by the Society in the purely educational field. It is hoped, however, that a performance of *Film and Reality* planned for next season will do something to arouse that interest in the educational uses of the film which is not very noticeable at present in Northern Ireland.

Membership has remained on the small side, but many guests from the British and American Forces have attended repertory shows. Any readers of *SIGHT AND SOUND* from Great Britain who find themselves exiled in the Belfast district will be welcomed to the monthly shows of the coming winter season, which it is hoped to begin in November, when difficulties about a cinema have been overcome. *Remontons Les Champs-Elysées*, *We from Kronstadt*, *Quai des Brumes* and *L'Esclave Blanche* are among the films in prospect.

Last season nine monthly editions of the Society's popular Film Bulletin and guide to Belfast releases were issued, and publication will probably start again in November. Many who subscribe to the Society do so largely because of the value of this Bulletin, which is a club magazine as well as a critical review of films. It is a feature of which the Society is particularly proud.

Non-members interested in the Society should get into touch with Miss Myfanwy Hammond, 56 Ulsterville Avenue, or Alfred Arnold, 6 College Green House, Belfast.

EDINBURGH FILM GUILD

The Edinburgh Film Guild has made arrangements to present a fourth war-time season of ten Sunday performances. In variety of interest the programmes will compare favourably with those of past years and the inclusion of several Soviet films will contribute something to an understanding of the life and aspirations of our Russian Allies. It is also intended to include several short American films not likely to be shown in ordinary cinema programmes. The season opened on October 18 with *The New Teacher*, a story of modern Russia against a background of village life. Other films from Soviet Russia will include Pudovkin's *General Souvorov* and *A Musical Story*.

ABERDEEN FILM SOCIETY

The Society has entered upon what promises to be a very healthy season and starts with a membership one hundred more than last year, thanks to the innovation of having both afternoon and evening performances. Seven sessions have been arranged and special concessions, to which there has been an encouraging response, have been made to members of our own and the Allied Forces.

The feature shown in October was *Entrée des Artistes*, and in November will be revived that very good but much neglected British film, *South Riding*.

DUNDEE AND ST. ANDREWS FILM SOCIETY

The Society celebrated a jubilee on October 11th, when it presented its fiftieth performance at the opening of the eighth season. It was thought that the prospective general Sunday opening of cinemas in response to a request from the military authorities, would result in a drop in membership. This, however, has not materialised and it seems certain that by the time of the second meeting the membership will have exceeded previous records and amount to about 1,000.

The opening programme consisted of *The Adventures of Chico* and *Le Roman d'un Tricheur*. A sharper contrast than these two films it would probably be hard to find. The choice nevertheless admirably illustrates the policy of the Society. While some Societies have endeavoured to present programmes illustrating a specific theme or reflecting a national outlook the Dundee Society has concentrated more on the programme justifying itself on its own merits.

Other performances will be given at fortnightly intervals until March 14th, making a total of ten meetings with, in addition a special Christmas show for children.

FILM SOCIETY OF AYRSHIRE

Because of travel restrictions the Film Society of Ayrshire has decided for the coming season to hold its meetings on alternate Sunday evenings at Ayr and Kilmarnock. As far as possible the same programme will be shown at each theatre. The opening programme is in the nature of a tribute to our American cousins and is headed by Raymond Massey's magnificent study of Lincoln, *The Spirit of the People*, supported by *Man the Enigma*, *The 13th Instant*, and Paul Rotha's *Blood Transfusion*. For the second programme the feature film will be John Baxter's searching *The Common Touch*, together with *Chico, Western Isles* and *Arabian Bazaar*. Future arrangements include *Merlusse*, *The Rich Bride*, *Tales from the Vienna Woods*, and *Fredlos*.

WORKERS' FILM ASSOCIATION

The Trades Union Congress decided to organise a series of twelve regional conferences on the Worker and War Problems, and invited the Association to provide a programme of films, so as to give point to the subject. The films selected to do this were *Builders*, *Shipbuilders*, and *Coal Front*. The conferences were most successful, and it was reported that at each conference, a wish was expressed that similar conferences in the future should have the advantage of films to illustrate the problems under discussion.

At the Trades Union Congress at Blackpool, the Association arranged a film show for delegates and the programme included a number of important films. A film of special interest to trade unionists on Rehabilitation entitled *Life Begins Again*, was introduced by two representatives of the medical profession, who explained the interesting work being done to put back injured workers to their old job. Injured workers are taken to special centres where they are trained to use injured limbs in a way to ensure cures in 90 per cent of cases. This was followed by a film distributed by the Ministry of Information entitled *The Harvest Shall Come*. There was also an opportunity of showing *Our Film*, made by the Denham film workers, as a contribution to the war effort. It was well received and we are pleased to announce that the Workers' Film Association has obtained non-theatrical rights of this film.

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